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Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANILA 6011

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, RP
SUBJ: POST-ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS IN CEBU

FOLLOWING CABLE RECEIVED FROM AMCONSUL CEBU:
1. SUMMARY: SIX DAYS AFTER APRIL 7TH'S INTERIM BATASANG PAMBANSA ELECTION APPARENTLY BROUGHT TOTAL VICTORY TOTHE 13-MAN PSEUDO-OPPOSITIONIST PUSYON BISAYAS (PB) SLATE, CEBU IS RIFE WITH RUMORS THAT FINAL OFFICIAL RETURNS FOR REGION VII WILL PROCLAIM FROM THREE TO SIX PRO-MARCOS KBL CANDIDATES WINNERS. THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE IS CHARGED, WITH BOTH THE PB AND KBL ACCUSING EACH OTHER OF FRAUD AND THE ELECTION RETURNS FROM THE ENTIRE PROVINCE OF NEGROS ORIENTAL UNDER SUSPICION. UNDENIABLY LARGE PRO-PB VOTE IS CLEARLY AN ANTI-MARCOS, ANTI-MARTICLA LAW PROTEST FROM AREA WHICH VIEWS ITSELF AS NEGLECTED UNDER MARCOS REGIME. BACKING OF PB BY MARCOS APPOINTEE, COMELEC COMMISSINER CASIMIR MADARANG, HAS RAISED SOME LOCAL SUSPICIONS THAT PRESIDENT WANTED TO DISCREDIT TRADITIONAL REGIONAL POLITICAL BOSSES REPRESENTED ON THE KBL SLATE. OFFICIAL RESULTS, NOT EXPECTED FOR SEVERAL DAYSN MAY WELL SHOW AT LEAST THREE KBL WINNERS, WITH INCUMBENT GOVERNOR EDUARDO GULLAS, EMILIO "LITO" OSMENA, RAMON DURANO III, AND FORMER GOVEJLOR RENE ESPINA MENTIONED BY VARIOUS OBSERVERS AS HAVING THE BEST CHANCE OF EVENTUALLY BEING NUMBERED IN THE TOP 13. IF MADARANG
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ENJOYS MARCOS'S BLESSING, HOWEVER, PRESIDENT MAY ACQUIESCE IN PB ELECTION SWEEP. END SUMMARY.

2. APRIL 13TH PRESS REPORTS ASSERT THAT COMELEC HAS TALLIED 18 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL VOTE CAST IN THE APRIL 7TH IBP ELECTION, WITH THE 13 CANDIDATES OF THE PB SLATE IN THE LEAD, FOLLOWED

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BY GULLAS, OSMENA, ANTHONIO CUENCO,AND DURANO. AN UNOFFICIAL TALLY BY A CIVIC ORGANIZATION, "THE CITIZENS NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON REFERENDA, PLEBISCITES, AND ELECTIONS (CINACORPE), STOPPED ITS WIDELY PUBLICZED TABULATION APRIL 11 CLAIMING APPROXIMATELY 30 PERCENT OF THE RETURNS ACCOUNTED FOR SHOWING THE PB LEADING 14TH PLACE GULLAS BY 23,000 VOTES.

3. BOTH SIDES ARE ACCUSING THE OTHER OF FRAUD. THE OFFICIAL ELECTIONS RETURNS FOR THE PROVINCE OF NEGROS ORIENTAL, REPORTEDLY HEAVILY PRO-PB, "DISAPPEARED" FOR A DAY AND HALF. THE PB CLAIMED THE PROVINCIAL ELECTION OFFICIAL CARRYING THEM TO CEBU WAS "KIDNAPPED" WHEN HE ARRIVED IN CEBU. THE GOVERNMENT VERSION IS THAT THE PHILIPPINE CONSTABULARY IN CEBU GAVE HIM, AND THE RETURNS, "PROTECTIVE CUSTODY" BECAUSE OF THREATS ON HIS LIFE. THE RETURNS WERE DELIVERED BY THE PC TO THE VOTE TALLY CENTER AFTER MORE THAN A DAY IN PC CUSTODY. THE PB HAS FILED A CHARGE WITH COMELEC DEMANDING THAT THESE RETURN NOT BE ACCEPTED, AND THE OFFICIAL TALLYING OF THE NEGROS ORIENTAL VOTES TEMPORARILY HAS STOPPED PENDING COMELEC DECISION.

4. KBL SOURCES TOLD CONSOFF THAT WHEN FINAL RETURNS ARE TALLIED THE KBL WILL HAVE SOME WINNERS. A PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT TO GOVERNMEOR GULLAS INSISTED THAT "6 OR 7" KBL
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CANDIDATES WOULD BE ELECTED. THIS ASSISTANT CLAIMED THAT THE PB HAD RUSHED TO CINACORPE UNOFFICIAL RETURNS FROM AREAS, PARTUCULARLY URBAN AREAS, WHERE PB WAS STRONG IN ORDER TO CREATE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE PB WAS WAY AHEAD, TO DISCREDIT LATER OFFICIAL RETURNS WHICH WOULD SHOW THE KBL DOING WELL IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

5. CEBU'S MAYOR EULOGIO BORRES TOLD CONSOFF APRIL 14 THAT KBL WOULD HAVE "AT LEAST THREE" WINNERS, AND NAMED GULLAS, OSMENA,AND CUENCO. BORRES ADDED THAT VICTOR DE LA SERNA AND GONZALO CATAN, FROM NEGROS ORIENTAL, MIGHT ALSO BE ELECTED. UNDERSTANDABLY, IN VIEW OF HIS LONG FEUD WITH THE CANDIDATE'S FATHER, BORRES BELITTLED RAMON DURANO III'S CHANCES, THOUGH SOME OTHER OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT YOUNG DURANO WILL MAKE IT AFTER "NEGOTIATIONS."

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6. ROLE OF MADARANG PUZZLING OFFICIALS - CEBU'S "OPEN SECRET" IN RECENT WEEKS HAS BEEN THE ABUNDANT FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED THE PB BY COMELEC COMMISSIONER CASIMIR MADARANG. GOVERNOR GULLAS' ASSISTANT TOLD CONSOFF POINT BLANK THAT MADARANG HAD BACKED THE PB, AND ACCUSED HIM OF PAYING OFF CINACORPE AS WELL. (ASSISTANT CLAIMED THAT A PB OFFICIAL HAD LAUGHINGLY TOLD SEVERAL HANGERS-ON AT THE OFFICIAL VOTE TALLYING CENTER THAT PUSYON FINANCING HAD COME FROM "THE CIA" -- BUT ASSISTANT ADDED: "BUT WE KNOW MADARNAG WAS FINANCING THEM.") MAYOR BORRES ALSO VOLUNTEERED THIS INFORMATION TO CONSOFF AND WAS CLEARLY PUZZLED ABOUT MADARANG'S ROLE. BORRES SAID THAT HE HAD COMPLAINED TO MARCOS ABOUT MADARANG'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE PB, HAD FILED "CHARGES" AGAINST HIM, BUT MARCOS HAD NOT ACTED, OTHER THAN TO LURE OSMENA, CUENCO,AND DE LA SERNA FROM THE PB RANKS. BORRES ASKED RHETORICALLY: "I KEEP ASKING MYSELF, WHY IS THE PRESIDENT DOING THIS? DOES HE PERHAPS WANT TO DISCREDIT THE OLD POLITICAL POWERS IN CEBU, BRING IN NEW NAMES?" BORRES LEFT HIS QUESTION UNANSWERED.

7. SCENARIO OFFERED BY OTHER POLITICAL OBSERVERS IS THAT "NEGOTIATIONS" ARE CURRENTLY UNDER WAY BETWEEN PB AND KBL TO DETERMINE HOW MANY KBL CANDIDATES WILL END
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UP AS WINNERS IN FINAL/OFFICIAL TALLY. ACCORDING TO THIS LINE, PB IS WILLING TO NEGOTIATE BECAUSE (A) SOME OF ITS MEMBERS ARE EITHER IN THE PRESIDENT'S OR FIRST LADY'S POLITICAL CAMP; (B) THE GOVERNMENT COULD FIND SOME PB CAMPAIGN STATEMENTS "SEDITIOUS"; AND (C) PB

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LOSERS WILL BE OFFERED GOVERNMENT JOBS. THIS SCENARIO IS RENDERED CREDIBLE BY MAYOR BORRES' APPARENT CONFIDENCE THAT AT LEAST THREE KBL CANDIDATES ULTIMATELY WILL WIN.

8. COMMENT: UNDENIABLY HEAVY PB VOTE THROUGHOUT REGION CAN BE READ WITHOUT QUESTION AS AN ANTI-MARCOS, ANTI-MARTIAL LAW PROTEST BY PEOPLE FROM REGION WHICH VIEWS ITSELF AS NEGLECTED BY MARCOS ADMINISTRATION, AND RESENTS THIS. VOTERS APPARENTLY RESPONDED ENTHUSIASTICALLY TO ANTI-MARCOS ORATORY OF NATALIO BACALSO, REPUTEDLY A SPELLBINDING ORATOR IN VISAYAN LANGUAGE, WHO DREW BIG CROWDS.

9. IN VIEW OF POSSIBLE MADARANG LINK WITH MARCOS, IT IS NOT CERTAIN THAT ANY KBL CANDIDATES WILL END UP WINNERS, BUT FACT THAT BORRES,AND GULLAS' ASSISTANT, BELIEVE SOME KBL WILL WIN LENDS CREDENCE TO THIS RUMOR. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT MARCOS WOULD WELCOME THE DEFEAT OF GOVERNOR GULLAS, WHO WAS MARCOS' DEPUTY IN THE BATASAN BAYAN AND WAS EXPECTED TO PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE IBP.

10. WHETHER MARCOS SECRETLY BACKED THE PB, PERHAPS TO DISCREDIT THE POLITICAL OLDTIMERS IN CEBU POLITICS, AS BORRES WONDERS, CANNOT BE PROVED FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT. CLEARLY HE TOLERATED QUESTIONABLE PARTISAN POLITICAL ACTIVITY ON THE PART OF ONE OF HIS APPOINTEES.
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IT IS POSSIBLE THAT MARCOS PERMITTED MADARANG TO FORM THE PB TO INSURE THAT THE ELECTION IN REGION VII WULD BE CONTESTED, THEN CHOPPED OFF ITS HEAD (BY PERSUADING OSMENA, CUENCO, AND DE LA SERNA TO RUN WITH THE KBL) WHEN IT APPEARED THAT THE PB WAS GROWING STRONG, AND SIMPLY UNDERESTIMATED THE IMPACT THIS MOVE WOULD HAVE ON THE PB AND THE ELECTORATE. THE PB INSERTED BACALSO LITERALLY AT THE 11TH HOUR TO FILL ONE OF THE VACANCIES CREATED BY THE DEFECTIONS TO THE KBL, AND HIS ANTI-MARCOS ORATORY SPEARHEADED THE PB CAMPAIGN AND FELL ON RECEPTIVE VISAYAN EARS. AIDED BY THE KBL'S LACK OF UNITY --EACH MAN SEEMED TO BE RUNNING FOR HIMSELF -- AND ALLEGED LACK OF CAMPAIGN FUNDS -- THE PB FOUND A LIFE OF ITS OWN. WHILE ALL 13 APPARENTLY SUCCESSFUL PB CANDIDATES MAY NOT SURVIVE THE OFFICIAL VOTE COUNT, THE PB, AND MORE SPECIFICALLY, CASIMIR MADARANG, MUST BE VIEWED AS A LOCAL FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH AS A RESULT OF THE PB'S FINE SHOWING THROUGHOUT REGION VII.
END COMMENT.

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